

DATE ISSUED: November 23, 2005 REPORT NO. CCDC-05-44

ATTENTION: Chair and Members of the Redevelopment Agency
Docket of November 29, 2005

SUBJECT: **PUBLIC HEARING** - Consideration of Marina Development Permit 2005-43 for the Dynasty Lofts Project, including Design Review of the Basic Concept/Schematic Drawings and Requested Exceptions (Fefferman) - Marina Sub Area of the Centre City Redevelopment Project

REFERENCE: Exhibit A - Basic Concept/Schematic Drawings
Exhibit B - Draft Marina Development Permit 2005-43
Exhibit C - Excerpts from the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Master Plan
Exhibit D - Marina Project Exception Table
Exhibit E - Environmental Secondary Study for the Dynasty Lofts Project

STAFF CONTACT: Suzanne Drolet, Associate Planner

SUMMARY

Issue - Should the Redevelopment Agency approve Marina Development Permit 2005-43, including associated Exceptions, as shown in the Basic Concept/Schematic Drawings?

Staff Recommendation - That the Redevelopment Agency approve Marina Development Permit 2005-43, including associated Exceptions, as shown in the Basic Concept/Schematic Drawings.

Centre City Development Corporation Recommendation - On October 26, 2005, the Corporation Board of Directors voted unanimously to recommend Design Review and project approval.

Centre City Advisory Committee (CCAC)/Project Area Committee (PAC) Recommendations - On October 19, 2005, the CCAC voted 21 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 recusals, and the PAC voted 18 in favor, 0 opposed, and 0 recusals, to recommend Design Review approval.

Other Recommendations - The Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Committee reviewed the project twice and recommends that the Redevelopment Agency grant Design Review and project approval.

Fiscal Impact - None.

BACKGROUND

This proposed project advances the Visions and Goals of the Centre City Community Plan and the Objectives of the Centre City Redevelopment Project by:

- C adding to the range of downtown housing opportunities,
- C increasing the downtown residential population, and
- C contributing to the vision of downtown as a major residential neighborhood.

DEVELOPMENT TEAM

ROLE/FIRM	CONTACT	OWNED BY
Owner/Developer: Ira Fefferman	Project Manager: Anh Ngu	Ira Fefferman, LLC (Privately Owned)
Architect: Fehlman LaBarre	Project Architect: Anh Ngu/Mark Fehlman	Mark Fehlman Mike LaBarre (Privately Owned)

DISCUSSION

The proposed project is a mixed-use residential building located on an approximately 5,000 square-foot site on the southwest corner of Third and Island avenues in the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District of the Marina Planned District. The project site is currently occupied by a low-rise commercial building. Other uses on the block include a six-story residential building to the west along Island Avenue, a four-story senior apartment building to the south (CCBA), as well as other low- and mid-rise commercial and residential buildings. Surrounding the site are two- to four-story residential and commercial buildings to the north, east, and west. No new projects have been approved in the immediate area for several years.

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Residential Project

Type of housing	Market-Rate Condominiums
Total number of units/total square feet	20/15,012 square feet
Number of bedrooms/unit	8 studios/ average 558 sq.ft. 12 1-bedrooms/average 685 sq.ft.
Retail	2,900 square feet
Land Area	5,000 square feet
Project density	175 units/acre

Parking	76 spaces (1:bedroom/unit, plus 46 commercial/public spaces)
Stories/Height	5 stories/68 feet (with Agency approval)
Floor Area Ratio/Permitted	3.5/4.0 (with Agency approval)
Projected Sales Price/Target Market	Market Rate
Inclusionary Housing Compliance	In-lieu fee

PROJECT ANALYSIS

The project site is located within the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District of the Marina Planned District, which requires the project to be evaluated against the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Master Plan as well as the Marina Planned District Ordinance (PDO) and Design Guidelines. The PDO provides Exceptions to the base allowances for Floor Area Ratio (FAR), building height, and other development standards upon meeting certain findings established in the PDO and upon approval of the CCDC Board and Redevelopment Agency.

The following table summarizes the PDO requirements, allowed Exceptions, and project proposal:

	Base Maximum	Maximum Allowed with Redevelopment Agency Approval of Exceptions	Proposed
Floor Area Ratio (FAR)	3.5	4.0	4.0
Building Height	50 feet	90 feet	68 feet
Streetwall Height	50 feet	Discretionary	68 feet
Common Open Space	30% site "open to sky" at grade or podium levels (minimum)	Discretionary	29% on roof terrace 7.5% on podium (2 nd level)

Design Analysis

The Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Master Plan provides guidance for redevelopment within the District by identifying key locations for special activities, important corridors, streetscape improvements such as landscaping and paving, and significant heritage buildings. The Master Plan also suggests ways that projects can incorporate

appropriate design gestures to the Asian heritage of the District, such as details, finishes, and trim.

The project proposes a contemporary architecture utilizing a variety of materials to invoke an Asian-inspired aesthetic, including metal cladding, stone, glass, and wood to create an attractive 5-story (68-foot) building. The building consists of four levels of residential uses above ground-level commercial, with the upper levels presenting a slightly different appearance for each frontage, tied together with a metal canopy (at the second floor line) and wood siding panels. The ground level is designed to enhance pedestrian activation along both frontages, with 16-foot storefronts comprised of large glass roll-up doors that open directly into the commercial space, framed by clerestory windows and wood trellis awnings. The storefronts are proposed to be a champagne-colored aluminum frame and each storefront bay is bordered by a multi-color mosaic tile column. Each of the four columns will illustrate one of the seasons, a traditional Asian theme. Utilities are located internal to the project, ensuring the maximum amount of transparency and street-level activation on this important corner site. Vehicles will access the subterranean parking via elevator lifts located mid-block on Island Avenue, adjacent to the residential entry. The garage entry doors are proposed to be a champagne-colored rolling door system.

The Island Avenue elevation is comprised of three primary elements. The westernmost bay is comprised of dark green metal siding extending from a natural stone base at the garage entry to the parapet, with two columns of projecting balconies. A metal canopy extends from street level up the wall between the balconies, providing architectural interest and functioning as privacy screens for the balconies. The remainder of this elevation is comprised of three, three-story glass bays of translucent (light transmitting) and clear glass, alternating with columns of projecting balconies. The upper three stories “rest” upon the second story, the design of which is distinguished with wood panels and guardrails, slightly cantilevered over the ground floor (two feet).

The Third Avenue elevation continues the use of wood siding at the second level. Decorative metal panels clad the floor slabs of the interior corridors, providing an opportunity for the project to incorporate Asian-inspired artwork. The stair enclosure, which is currently illustrated as a mesh screen, is proposed to be approximately 50% open, providing views into the stairway. The project design team is currently investigating opportunities to incorporate artisan metal work on this element.

Requested Exceptions - The PDO provides for flexibility in several development standards upon meeting certain criteria and findings, and upon Redevelopment Agency and CCDC Board approval. Staff has reviewed the requested Exceptions against these criteria and believes that the appropriate findings can be made to support the project as presented.

Exceptions

Under the Marina PDO, each block contains FAR and building height limitations. Each of these standards may be increased upon the meeting of specific criteria or findings. In addition, Exceptions to any of the other development standards within the PDO may be granted upon meeting specific findings. The Exception process is intended to serve as an incentive to original and superior project design. The granting of Exceptions requires the review of the Board and the Redevelopment Agency in public hearings.

The PDO allows a FAR of 3.5 and a height of 50 feet by right, and allows the granting of Exceptions to permit a FAR of 4.0 and a height of 90 feet if certain criteria are met. The project proposes a FAR of 4.0 and a height of approximately 68 feet. The proposed Exceptions are consistent with those granted to numerous other projects within the Marina District, including those listed in the attached Exception Table for the District.

1. Increase in the FAR from 3.5 to 4.0

The project is proposing a FAR of 4.0. The PDO allows an increase from the base 3.5 FAR when at least 3 of 7 criteria listed in Section 103.2012B4c are met. The project meets the following 3 criteria:

- a. *At least one full level of underground parking is provided.*

The project provides four full levels of parking in an underground structure.

- b. *The required ground-floor activity increases from fifty percent (50%) to sixty percent (60%) of the street frontage. Such increase in activity shall be consumer-oriented commercial or residential land use.*

The building provides retail space around the perimeter of the project, except for the driveway entrance and required exit stairways and service rooms.

- c. *No Redevelopment Agency financial assistance, excluding off-site improvements, is required for the project.*

The developer has not requested any Agency financial participation in this project.

2. Increase in the overall, and streetwall, height from 50 to 68 feet.

The PDO establishes the base height for this block at 50 feet, allowing an increase up to 90 under Section 103.2012(B)(2) after four criteria are evaluated. These four criteria serve as a method of evaluating whether the granting of an increase in height is warranted by the project complying with one or more of these performance objectives. Compliance with all

four of the criteria is not required, but the granting of an increase in height is an incentive for projects to provide these design amenities.

- a. *Applicant shall provide one (1) or more parks, setback areas, or widened and enhanced public right-of-way. Such areas shall be landscaped by the applicant. Their location shall complement the adjoining right-of-way and while either public or private in nature, shall be designed to be visually or physically enjoyed by residents, residents of adjoining structures and the general public.*

The development is located on the corner of Island and Third avenues, and Island Avenue has a 30 foot-wide sidewalk area, which will be improved to provide a double row of street trees and installation of Island Avenue paving (as required by the Streetscape Manual). In addition, the applicant is proposing a sidewalk café along Island Avenue to provide seating for the ground-floor commercial space (anticipated to be restaurant space) with decorative railings and potentially, a removable stone wall (with approval of an Encroachment Removal and Maintenance Agreement by the City). Enhanced sidewalk paving will lead to the recessed residential entry. The lack of a significant setback area or park is not justified on this size of project (5,000 square-foot site) as the overall height reaches only 68 feet and such public open space is typically intended to offset a large, more massive project. Other mid-rise projects have been granted this Exception without meeting this criteria.

- b. *Applicant's project shall increase nonresidential or residential activity at the street level of the development from fifty percent (50%) of the total frontage to all the remaining street frontage with the exception of vehicular access and truck service delivery to serve the site. Such activity shall be directly accessible to the public right-of-way. Entrances to activity shall be provided at intervals which are approximately fifty (50) feet or less in distance apart.*

As mentioned previously, retail space is located around the perimeter of the development and will be directly accessible to the public.

- c. *Applicant's project shall accommodate all, or a substantial amount of, parking needed to serve the proposed development below-grade.*

Four full levels of underground parking (containing 76 spaces) are provided.

- d. *Applicant shall mitigate the mass and scale of the project by reducing the size of the floor plate and creating a more slender tower which enhances view corridors or reduces the effect of shadow on adjoining developments.*

This criteria is intended for high-rise development in order to avoid large towers which could block views and create unnecessary adverse shadow impacts on surrounding developments. This project does not have a tower component and reaches only 68 feet in height. In addition, the scale of the project is consistent with the surrounding mid-rise developments. The project does provide a stepped facade along Third Avenue to be compatible with the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District.

The project meets two of the four performance objectives established for evaluating an Exception for an increase in height, with the other two objectives being only somewhat applicable to this project.

Findings for Exceptions

In addition to the criteria discussed above for the Exception to the base FAR and height limit, the Marina PDO requires that approval of Exceptions include an evaluation of the following criteria:

1. *Demonstration that the proposed exceptions implement the intent of the Marina Planned District and Urban Design Plan and Development Guidelines.*
2. *The granting of the exception does not adversely affect the development of the residential community.*
3. *The granting of the exception will have a beneficial impact on the residential community.*
4. *The granting of an exception will not establish an adverse precedent for the consideration of future requests for exception.*
5. *The design of the proposed development is distinctively San Diegan and architecturally superior.*

The granting of the FAR and height Exceptions results in an increase in density for the project, which contributes to increased housing opportunities within the District. Providing the required open space in two areas, including a rooftop terrace, also assists in the ability to maximize density within this mid-rise project. Therefore, the granting of these Exceptions has a beneficial impact on the District by creating a desired mix of residential opportunities. The Exceptions are consistent with those granted to other Marina projects over the years and therefore will not establish any adverse precedents. The scale of the project is

consistent with the surrounding Island Avenue Lofts and Horton Grand Hotel Pioneer Loft and the project's attractive architecture contributes to the mix of styles within the District. Based on this criteria, staff recommends the granting of the Exceptions as requested.

Streetscape Design - The project will incorporate streetscape improvements consistent with the District Master Plan and Streetscape Manual, including street trees, sidewalk paving and street lights. The project will be required to continue the double row of Chinese Flame trees along the Island Avenue street frontage, and a single row of the same along Third Avenue. Asian Pacific paving with accent pavers will be installed along both frontages.

Asian Pacific Thematic District Committee - The Committee reviewed the project twice (the first meeting did not have a quorum and could not make a formal recommendation). After receiving comments from the Committee, the developer incorporated several suggestions into the project which were not able to be included in the staff report drawing package but will be brought and presented to the Committee, including a decorative screen on the stair tower and a proposed design for the mosaic tile columns. The Committee was enthusiastic with the blend of contemporary architecture and the subtle Asian-inspired details that reflect the multi-cultural Asian community. The Committee also expressed appreciation for the improvement to the site, the surplus parking proposed in the project, and the responsiveness of the design to the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Master Plan.

Consistency with Plans - The project is consistent with the Marina PDO and Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Master Plan, including the requested Exceptions that require Redevelopment Agency approval. The project provides a mid-rise design of condominiums at market rates, which will add to the diversity of affordable and market-rate apartments and condominiums being constructed in the area, as well as commercial space in key locations.

Environmental Impact - Under the 1992 Master Environmental Impact Report (MEIR) and Final Subsequent Environmental Impact Report (SEIR), an Environmental Secondary Study is prepared for all developments in the Centre City area in order to evaluate the project's compliance with the Community Plan and PDO and, therefore, the findings and conclusions of the MEIR and SEIR. Unless the project is found to be out of compliance with those planning documents, no further environmental review is required.

SUMMARY/CONCLUSION

The project is consistent with the Marina PDO and Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Master Plan and is supported by the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Committee, the CCAC, and the Centre City Development Corporation. Staff believes that the project will provide an attractive building for this site that is compatible in scale and materials with the existing and redeveloping neighborhood. Therefore, staff is recommending that the Agency grant Design Review and project approval.

Respectfully submitted,

Concurred by:

Suzanne Drolet
Associate Planner

Peter J. Hall
President

Attachments:

- Exhibit A - Basic Concept/Schematic Drawings
- Exhibit B - Draft Marina Development Permit 2005-43
- Exhibit C - Excerpts from the Asian Pacific Thematic Historic District Master Plan
- Exhibit D - Marina Project Exception Table
- Exhibit E - Environmental Secondary Study for the Dynasty Lofts Project